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VENEZUELAN RESPONSE AND INTEGRATION OFFICE (VRIO)

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Helping local actors address the needs of Venezuelan migrants, Colombian returnees, and receptor communities.

OVERVIEW

The Venezuelan Response and Integration Office (VRIO) helps the Colombian Government address increasing migration from Venezuela. It coordinates with government agencies, civil society organizations, and international donor organizations to respond to needs, like health service access, of Venezuelan migrants, receptor communities, and Colombian returnees that had previously migrated to Venezuela. VRIO also works with governmental agencies to develop a comprehensive policy response to migration.

Since 2015, Colombia has opened its borders, homes, and hearts to millions of Venezuelans migrants seeking health care, employment, and other essential services. This migration is the largest cross-border mass exodus in the Western Hemisphere's history, and it poses extraordinary challenges to Colombian society. Due to Colombia's limited experience with immigration, the increase in migrants has overwhelmed government actors and has resulted in increased xenophobia, human trafficking, labor exploitation, and recruitment by illegal armed actors. The increase in migration has also complicated Colombia's transition to peace following 50 years of internal conflict by putting an additional strain on government resources and conflict-affected communities.

COMPONENTS

SUPPORTING POLICY DEVELOPMENT

VRIO strengthens the Colombian Government's capacity to manage migration flows and refer migrants to essential public services. Support at the national level focuses on Temporary Protective Status (TPS) implementation, developing a legal and policy framework for migration, and integrating migration as a cross-cutting issue in public service delivery. At the local level, VRIO programming improves local governments' ability to plan, pay for, and deliver services to migrants and Colombian returnees.

IMPROVING HEALTH AND EDUCATION SERVICE ACCESS

VRIO works with the Colombian Government to provide sustainably financed, high-quality health and education services to Venezuelan migrants, Colombian returnees, and receptor communities. VRIO also increases the Colombian health and education systems' capacity to respond to current and future shocks, including the COVID-19 pandemic.

FOSTERING ECONOMIC INCLUSION

VRIO promotes long-term integration of migrants into local economies through employability and job access. VRIO supports the development of migrant-owned enterprises through training initiatives, improved access to financial services, and partnerships with public and private sector actors. VRIO also fosters peaceful coexistence between Venezuelans and receptor communities.

PROMOTING GOVERNANCE AND HUMAN RIGHTS

VRIO promotes and protects the human rights of migrants and receptor communities, focusing primarily on human rights violations that disproportionately affect migrants, like gender-based violence and trafficking in persons (TIP). It does this by countering xenophobia, supporting public policy development, and building local actors' capacities to meet migrant, returnee, and receptor community needs.

RESULTS

- Improved the Colombian Government's inter-institutional TIP coordination committees;
- Provided workforce training to 4,360 Venezuelans, 3,400 of which were then placed in jobs;
- Enrolled over 82,500 migrants in the health care system through regional health insurance enrollment days;
- Supported 840 migrants and 410 host communities through entrepreneurship and business strengthening;
- Provided equipment and 460 surge staff to Colombian migration authorities to pre-register over 2.3 million migrants and approve TPS status for 1.2 million migrants;
- Helped 400 educational institutions improve quality and access to education and increase school enrollment, learning, and wellbeing for more than 200,000 children and adolescents; and
- Strengthened human rights protection systems in receptor communities by incorporating a migrant component in the Colombian Government's 2021-2023 General Guidelines for the National Human Rights Action Plan.